

YUAN YUAN

STEAM ROOMS

Exhibition 24th of June to 30th of July 2011

Opening Thursday June 23th

From 6pm to 9pm

Curator : Ami Barak



Yuan Yuan, *Steam Room 1*, 2010

Oil on canvas, 180 x 170cm

© Yuan Yuan, courtesy JGM. Galerie

Jean-Gabriel Mitterand Gallery is hosting the first personal show of Yuan Yuan, a Chinese painter of the younger generation now stepping into the international art scene. He was born in Huangzhou, a town with a reputation for its art academy, in the painting department of which Yuan Yuan studied. He still lives and works in Huangzhou. After the end of his studies in 2008, he has been participating in group shows all across China. He was even dubbed by a group of artists led by Madeln (Xu Zhen) who organized two personal shows for him in Shanghai, thus contributing to making him better known for his undeniable qualities as a painter. During a recent trip to China, Jean-Gabriel Mitterand and myself noticed two of his works in a group show, and while we did not know anything about this artist before, we were both struck by the retinian power to be found in his paintings and by the way he tackles his topics. After information was gathered and a meeting with the artist organized (thanks to the Shopping Gallery of Shanghai, a self-managed space run by Alexia Dehaebe), the decision was made by JGM Gallery to invite the artist and show his works in Paris.

What is readily noticeable is the way the artist makes the most of a well-tempered technique and treats surface and matter. These hints not only at his subjective experience but also at his constantly renewed interest for images produced by the unceasing upheavals his country has been going through, an interest which is a mixture of attraction and critique. The kitsch and false interiors of his fellow countrymen turned into rich men overnight but who can only resort to the tinsel model of Hollywood, come in a variety of forms as if they were so many attempts at exorcism. At the same time, they retain an old-fashioned feel, like relics from a tradition to which they don't belong any longer but whose cultural horizon is still untouched. The swimming-pools built in mosaic and the saunas also possess a strong material and aesthetic presence, revealing themselves as quasi-abstract, pointillist objects that never cease to question this history in the present as well as its neighbours' fantasms. As for the landscapes, they are wandering scenes caught in an iridescent light, a dense and fantasized nature whose magic is almost dressed up in a photographic halo.

Yuan Yuan is making his first steps out of his native country and he has at heart to show that he belongs to the new generation of contemporary artists, driven by the desire to be perceived as emblematic interpreters of China's economic and social transition, for best or for worse.

His paintings prompts spectators to understand that context changes provoke transmutations of meaning. In this Parisian show, Yuan Yuan provides us with a startling summary of his quest for self and of his research into the impact of painting. His obsessions and their inspired transcriptions testify to his great talent.

Ami Barak